

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
LINDA LINGLE  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII  
WASTEWATER BRANCH

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CHARLES DAWRS  
Co-Chair

MYRON NOMURA  
Co-Chair

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**Board of Certification of Operating Personnel**  
**In Wastewater Treatment Facilities**  
1350 Sand Island Parkway, Bldg. 3A  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96819

*John M. Dawrs*

February 12, 2009

Thomas Arizumi  
Chief, Environmental Management Division  
State of Hawaii  
Department of Health  
P.O. Box 3378  
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378

Dear Mr. Arizumi:

Subject: **Report on Out-of-State Travel for Charles H. Dawrs**

Charles H. Dawrs represented the Hawaii Board of Certification of Operating Personnel in Wastewater Treatment Plants (BOC) at the annual Association of Boards of Certification (ABC) conference in La Quinta, California from January 27 to January 30, 2009.

The conference was attended by 95 individuals representing certification boards from 37 states, the US EPA, Canada, the Caribbean, Guam, and Saipan (Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands).

During the conference, contacts were established with the following Committees and Task Forces to benefit the State of Hawaii as resources for future policy and decision making pertaining to wastewater operator training and certification:

ABC Committee on Certification and Standards  
ABC Committee on Validation and Examination  
ABC Task Force on Reciprocity  
ABC Task Force on Distance Learning  
ABC Task Force on Operator Tracking Information Systems  
ABC Task Force on Exam Delivery and Technology

The following is a synopsis of the conference highlights, not all of which are presented here but those which are of particular applicability to the Hawaii operator certification program.

### ***Shortage of Treatment Plant Operators and Need for Recruitment and Training.***

Based upon the conference presentations and round table discussions, it is evident that the State of Hawaii and the rest of the United States will be faced with a critical shortage of certified wastewater treatment plant operators by the year 2012 due to an anticipated retirement of 37% of the currently certified operators nationwide and future challenges in recruitment and training of new hires in the wastewater industry will amplify the problem.

It is imperative that an aggressive recruitment and training program be initiated in Hawaii. One goal of the conference is to have the wastewater industry designated as a "Green Industry" by the US Department of Labor and Relations. This goal would hopefully enable the industry to gain access to funding thru initiatives that President Obama will push for in the economic stimulus and work force development programs in the near future. The "Green Industry" label will be a must for branding and marketing for recruits in the X and Y generations of the future workforce members in Hawaii.

### ***Certification Testing Using Computer Based Administration.***

It would be in the State of Hawaii's interest to move forward with Computer Based Testing which would allow for a greater frequency of testing than the current Paper Based Testing administered twice annually in Hawaii. CBT testing could be held 6 days per week for qualified candidates, which could reduce the time needed for a qualified applicant to proceed with testing for certification by 6 months in certain cases. The additional cost for this type of testing will be justified by the urgent need to replace retiring certified operators in the near future.

### ***Need to Revamp Hawaii Operator Certification Regulations.***

It is also apparent that the State of Hawaii's HARs 11-61 needs to be amended to bring us in line with what the rest of the United States is moving towards in the standards for operator experience and training to qualify for certification testing. This will facilitate the granting of certification grade reciprocity with other states and improve Hawaii's chance of attracting currently certified operators from other states to work in Hawaii wastewater treatment plant operations.

### ***Management Information Systems.***

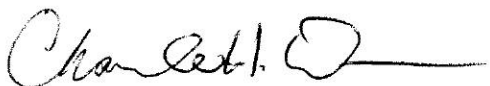
The State of Hawaii should also consider looking into Information Systems for tracking operator training, certification and license renewals. The Province of Ontario Canada currently has a system based on Oracle-run databases and Utah has a similar system that is now "paperless". This would greatly reduce the work load of the Hawaii BOC and improve our ability to expedite identifying operators qualified for certification testing.

***Perspectives.***

In closing, I believe it is in the State of Hawaii's best interest for the Hawaii BOC to grow and expand its relationship with ABC's various committees and task forces. Doing so will progressively enhance local operator professionalism at a level in parity with standards of other states, and ensure the safety and health of Hawaii's citizens and environment.

To achieve this, I recommend that the Hawaii BOC continue as a member of ABC and participate in future ABC conferences that host our counterparts who are faced with similar certification regulation and program administration challenges.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles H. Dawrs", followed by a horizontal line.

Charles H. Dawrs, Co-Chair  
Board of Certification of Operating  
Personnel in Wastewater Treatment Plants